

OLC 75-2308
H SC

18 September 1975

MEMORANDUM TO: CIA TASK FORCE
INFO : DCI Special Counsel
SUBJECT : Sterilization/Sanitization

1. As all are aware, we have a major problem with the HSC on the matter of declassification. A closely related matter is that of material which we delete from classified documents prior to passing them to the HSC. In the minds of the HSC, our deletions appear in some instances to be an indication on our part of a desire to alter a record, so as to put our activities in a better light. Such is obviously not the case, and the question is how best to handle the problem.

2. I have just reviewed in detail the sanitization process as performed on approximately 500 pages of material sent to the HSC in response to their 12 September subpoena. The subject was the 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam. Approximately 140 lines were deleted, in a total of approximately 30 deletions. Of the 30 deletions, 25 related to COMINT, and five named specific sources, either by position, nationality, or both. Of the COMINT deletions, most showed an ability to monitor a certain circuit or link at a certain time. In most cases, general references to COMINT, such as "... intercepted messages indicate..." were left in. (We think this is quite proper, and encourage this practice.)

3. A review of other sanitized papers passed to the HSC indicates that when time pressure permits, a blank space created by a sanitized item is sometimes filled with a short indication of the reason for the deletion. Specific phrases used were:

Involves sensitive intelligence source

Information provided in confidence by a foreign government

Operational details of overhead photography mission

4. This list is not exhaustive, but it does suggest a new approach to the question of sterilization, particularly since our reasons for sterilization fall into pretty clearly defined groups.

RECOMMENDATION

That we develop a series of categories of materials which we are most likely to sterilize from a document. (Cat. 1, Cat. 2, etc.) With this list developed, each sterilized item could be given a category, which would give HSC members a greater feeling for why we had deleted certain portions of what we pass them. Some examples of such categories are listed below:

Category 1: Identifies sensitive source

Category 2: COMINT related information

Category 3: Provided in confidence by a foreign government

Category 4: Operational details of overhead photography missions

Concerned Directorates will probably have other categories to suggest. Once a fairly definitive list is assembled, I suggest that the procedure be used in all subsequent sterilization procedures. I believe that the system might be helpful to those sanitizing documents, and might also help the recipients of our documents to understand the thinking behind our sanitization procedures.

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Review Staff

04 275.2309
HSC

Review Staff: 75/2993A

Date 18 September 1975

TO : CIA Task Force
FROM : The Review Staff,
SUBJECT : SSC/HSC Request

DPG

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RECEIVED: Date _____ Time _____

SUBJECT: HSC Request for Interviews with Three DDO Officers

The attached letter has been received by the Review Staff from the HSC, as of 1500 hours, 18 September. We are taking no action on it until 19 September, at the earliest, due to the continuing impasse on document control and declassification with the HSC. Once this issue has been settled, the way will be cleared for establishment of ground rules for interviews, designed to protect officers under cover, and the subjects discussed with them.

The Review Staff is aware of the problems (including that of geographic location), which this letter poses. The passing on of this letter does not indicate that this request has been in any way "accepted"; it is designed only as an alert of an impending issue of considerable sensitivity.

Comments:

	Action	Info
SC/DCI		X
A/DDA		X
A/DDI		X
A/DDO		X
A/DDS&T		X
OGC		X
OLC		X
IG		X
B. Evans		X

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